

APG employee receives presidential recognition for volunteer service

Story by
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For some, volunteering is simply a desire to help others in need. But for Donna Averion-Laird of Oak Ridge Associated Universities’ office at Aberdeen Proving Ground, volunteering has a special significance close to her heart.

Averion-Laird was recently presented the President’s Volunteer Service Award for volunteering more than 4,800 hours with the Abingdon Fire Company.

A project manager for the ORAU Science Education Program located at the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, she has been pulling 12-hour shifts in the evening at least once-a-week with the Abingdon Fire Company as an emergency medical technician, intravenous specialist.

Averion-Laird said that she was inspired to earn certification as an EMT after learning her daughter was born with a cardiac problem.

“Shortly after receiving [my] certification, my daughter was given a clean bill of health,” Averion-Laird said. “Not wanting to let all of my hard work go to waste, I thought surely there must be people in the local community I could help.”

In 2003, the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation created the President’s Volunteer Service Award program as a way to thank and honor Americans who, by their demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer service. The award recognizes individuals, Families and groups that have achieved a certain standard, which is measured by the number of hours served over a 12-month period or cumulative hours earned throughout

the course of a lifetime.

As a member of the Abingdon Fire Company, Averion-Laird has been recognized as one of the top 10 emergency medical services responders and has responded to 1,768 calls since 1995. She served as an EMS lieutenant from 2001 to 2004 and was selected as the Abingdon Fire Company EMS Person of the Year in 2002.

This year, Averion-Laird was selected to be the company’s vice president.

Averion-Laird’s manager, Joanne Rasnake and Abingdon Fire Company Crew Chief Bill Dousa nominated her for the award. Dousa wrote in his nomination that Averion-Laird “has not only served as a top EMS responder, but also as a leader, trainer, mentor and role model for new

members. During her tenure at the Abingdon Fire Company, Donna Averion-Laird has represented the pinnacle of public service, spending much of her time caring for those in need of emergency medical services in her community and enhancing the continuance of the EMS service.”

Humble about her work, Averion-Laird said she was surprised to hear that she had been selected for the award.

“Every volunteer is so deserving. I didn’t think I would be one of them,” she said, adding that she plans to continue to volunteer with the Abingdon Fire Company, as well as with various church-sponsored events in her community.

She said she’s seen and treated everything from nose

bleeds to heart attacks. She thanked her husband and her three children for their support and patience.

“It’s so rewarding to help others,” she said, adding that calls have often taken her away from her Family or “out of my warm bed.”

“But volunteers go willingly because there are people out there who really need us and who are genuinely grateful,” she said.

ORAU is a university consortium leveraging the scientific strength of 98 major research institutions to advance science and education by partnering with national laboratories, government agencies and private industry.

ORAU manages the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education for the U.S. Department of Energy.